
REPORT TO:	Housing & Community Services	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	19 th April 2012	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Mark Alflat (Director of Operations)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Stuart Batchelor Head of Community and Planning batchelors@south-derbys.gov.uk 01283 595820	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Armed Forces Community Covenant	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	District wide	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS 07

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members recommend that the Council pledges its support to the Armed Forces Community Covenant and will work with the Royal British Legion, Derbyshire Branch, to promote awareness of the Covenant throughout the District.
- 1.2 To work with the Royal British Legion to promote opportunities for applications to be made to the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The report provides background on the Armed Forces Community Covenant and associated community grants scheme and recommends that the Council should pledge its support to the Covenant.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community. This service community can include ex service personnel. The Covenant is being promoted by the Royal British Legion who recognise that many armed forces personnel live or have contacts within the South Derbyshire community. Information on the Armed Forces Community Covenant is attached as Annexe No.1.
- 3.2 Many people have become involved in supporting the Service community, through Service charities or more recently by participating in Armed Forces Day. The Council itself has shown support for the armed services by granting the freedom of the District to the Mercian Regiment and recognising the Regiment at last years South Derbyshire Day. The Community Covenant scheme aims to build upon this support.

- 3.3 The South Derbyshire Partnership has already considered how the various partners can support the armed forces community and these offers will be promoted on the Councils website and through printed materials. Armed Forces Day is a positive expression of support
- 3.4 Many Local Authorities already extend support to the Armed Forces beyond the national commitments, for instance some councils offer free access to swimming pools for Serving personnel. In Derbyshire the County Council and City Council have signed up to the Covenant and a number of the districts are currently going through the process.
- 3.5 In return there is much the Armed Forces Community can do to support their local communities. The Community Covenant scheme encourages the Armed Forces Community to do their bit to nurture this two-way relationship.
- 3.6 Community Covenants may look quite different from one location to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity.
- 3.7 The starting point for any Community Covenant is signing the Community Covenant pledge. This document sets out what a Community Covenant seeks to achieve in a particular area and where this will be signed by representatives from all parts of the Community. In most cases the lead signatories will be a senior representatives from the Local Authority and Service community who will be signing on behalf of the Armed Forces Community (although in areas where there isn't a Serving presence the pledge may be signed by those representing the veterans community). In South Derbyshire such a signing could take place when the Mercian Regiment return from their tour of duty in Afghanistan.
- 3.8 In terms of the positive offers that can be made by the District Council and its contracted partners Active Nation (Green Bank and Etwall Leisure Centres) and Aurora Country Developments (Rosliston Forestry Centre) the following is an initial list that Members can consider.
- Sports Pass for free use of leisure centres for armed forces personnel and families (funded by Active Nation) and activities in the parks.
 - Free annual car parking pass at Rosliston Forestry Centre.
 - Free entry to Forest Frenzy and Environmental Education events at Rosliston Forestry Centre.
 - Family Pass to Last Night of the Proms.
 - Further potential offers could be to let 'Help For Heroes' use the Town Hall for a fundraising event once a year free of charge.
 - Housing law relating to Homelessness was changed in 2008 whereby an ex-member of the armed forces can now approach the local Council for housing assistance simply by being currently resident. Were this to be a non ex forces person we may well refer the applicant back to an area where he/she has a stronger local connection.

The Community Covenant Grant scheme

3.9 On 16 May 2011 the Defence Secretary announced that £30M of central Government funding has been allocated over the next four years to support the Community Covenant. The scheme aims to support projects at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. The scheme is likely to favour applications for funding from local groups for practical projects which deliver rapid results and meet the aims of the scheme. Applications will have to be submitted jointly by at least two parties to the local Community Covenant: one from the Armed Forces Community (such as a Service unit, a veterans' group, or a families organisation), and one from the wider community (such as a Local Authority or service provider, a commercial organisation, or a private individual). For South Derbyshire it is likely to be the Royal British Legion and the District Council. Details on the Scheme are provided as Annexe No.2

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The offers of access to leisure facilities and events are at the expense of the managing contactors or a small loss of income to the District Council for ticket fees or a facility booking.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The Council has expressed its support to the armed forces through its on going relationship with the Mercian Regiment and the signing of the Covenant will further illustrate in a practical way that support.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 By pledging to the Covenant opportunities will be available for armed forces personnel and their families but more importantly local people/organisations will have the opportunity to access grant funding for projects which will have wider benefits for the local community.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 South Derbyshire District Council can further express its support for the British Armed Forces and their families in a practical and sustainable way. Further support will be provided to those individuals/families to help them develop projects that could receive funding from the Armed Forces Covenant and have a benefit to the wider community.